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In February, 1863, the Government began to sell the conquered territory at auction for the Federal direct tax levied by the Act of August 5, 1861. Some of the land was sold to private individuals and some was bid in by the United States for naval and military purposes and some for "school farms," the profits from which were to be applied to the education of the Negro, now declared free by Act of Congress, July 17, 1862,[33] and by virtue of the President's proclamation of January 1, 1863.

In 1864 all Government plantations were leased to white superintendents. After rejecting in 1862 the plan of the cotton agents to rent out the plantations, the Government had come two years later to accept it. But General Saxton, still the director of "freedmen's affairs," did not propose to stand by and see the Negro abused. In April, 1864, he issued a circular requiring all superintendents of plantations, whether of government or private ownership, to file a signed statement with their general superintendents setting forth the terms of the agreement existing between themselves and their laborers. The general superintendent was then ordered to visit the plantation, explain the contract to the Negroes, and affix to it the names of all who agreed to the terms. Any laborer who objected to them was warned to leave his employer or to stay at his own risk.[34]

In many instances, the general superintendents encouraged the teachers to lease the school farms and permitted them to do so free of rent, provided that they live on the plantation and teach the children of their "dis-

[33] *U. S. Statutes at Large*, XII, 591. Congress declared free all slaves of rebel masters on places occupied by the United States forces, or escaping thereto.

[34] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 262n.

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175 657 658 427 tricts." Arthur Sumner who had been the teacher for Chisolm's plantation on St. Helena Island since 1862 outlined in a letter to a friend some of the difficulties of planting under the system arising out of the sale of plantations:

175 658 657 248 I think I have not told you that I have become a cotton-planter—or, as we style each other a speculator? I have been forced to this, most reluctantly, by the fact that this plantation has been made one of the School Farms. . . . If I did not lease the farm, it would be given to some one else, who might choose to remove me and employ some one else as the teacher of my school. And besides, the privileges which Government has hitherto allowed the teachers, and which are equivalent to a much larger sum of money than our salaries amount to, will probably be withdrawn before long so that I am obliged to make some money in order to support myself. I have therefore been obliged to borrow capital at the North, and before the crop is matured shall have to get a good deal more. The expenses are very large—including the purchase of mules, carts, grain, and before long, horses, furniture, cow harness, plows & so on. Carpentering, too, is to be no small item. And when the aforesaid privileges are disallowed, my expenses will reach a formidable figure. Add to this, that the young man who has undertaken to manage the farm for me, is to have one third of the profits, and there will remain to me after the sale of the crop no more than $1200 or $1500 net profit, with which to begin the ensuing year.[35]

175 657 The Government thus gave up the paternalistic idea of government-operated plantations and was content until the passage of the Freedman's Bureau Act[36] in 1865, to exercise only a general supervision over the Negro, permitting someone else, into whose qualifications it did not

[35] MS in Sumner Papers. St. Helena Island, March 1, 1864.
[36] *U. S. Statutes at Large*, XIII, 507-509.

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Sundays and helped conduct their praise meetings and funerals, but the Negroes were jealous of their praise meetings and did not want any of the whites to attend communion except those who were Baptists. The superintendents organized Sabbath schools so that those who did not attend the regular schools might have an opportunity of learning to read the Bible. It was not uncommon for as many as three hundred to gather at Brick Church on Sunday mornings for instruction.

The "contrabands" took readily to the schools which Pierce established. He attempted to place one teacher on every plantation who should conduct classes several hours a day in the praise house, but there was a great scarcity of teachers, so that on some plantations the people received only such instruction as the superintendents had time to give. Nevertheless, the schools were perhaps the best agents for obtaining the good will of the people. The books and slates which the benevolent societies supplied seemed a proof to them of the Yankees' interest in their welfare. By June, 1863, there were twelve schools in the department attended by 2,500 persons, some of whom were adults who received instruction after their work was done. By the next year there were thirty schools conducted by forty or forty-five teachers, with an average attendance of 2,000 pupils.[46]

The thought of the black folk within the Federal lines at Port Royal eagerly grasping for the crumbs of knowledge so long denied them inspired Whittier to write the following song for the schools of St. Helena Island:

[46] Pierce, *Addresses and Papers*, pp. 107, 108.

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"The very oaks are greener clad,
The waters brighter smile;
Oh, never shone a day so glad
On sweet Saint Helen's Isle!

"For none in all the world before
Were ever glad as we,
We're free on Carolina's shore,
We're all at home and free!"[47]

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Among the first group of teachers to reach Port Royal was Miss Laura M. Towne of Philadelphia. Instead of beginning at once to teach, she acted as secretary to Pierce and greatly assisted him in his work. She was soon joined by her friend, Miss Ellen Murray, who at once began a school at The Oaks, where she and Miss Towne were stationed. Later in the year Miss Towne assisted her in the work. In August, 1862, she wrote, "We snatch a lunch and begin school. I have the middle class, Ellen the oldest and youngest. At four, school is out for the children. Ellen then takes the adults while I go doctoring down to the 'nigger houses.'"[48] Later Miss Towne obtained permission to hold her school in Brick Church and still later the Philadelphia Society, by whom she was employed, sent her a schoolhouse ready to be erected. This was the genesis of the school which Miss Towne and her associates in Pennsylvania came finally to call Penn School. Year after year she and Miss Murray labored against great odds to maintain the school, teaching without salary when the funds of the benevolent societies ran low, meeting many of the expenses with personal funds.

[47] *Atlantic Monthly*, XII (September, 1863), 304.
[48] *Letters and Diary*, p. 87.

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When the Government abandoned Pierce's plan of training the Negro for citizenship with the sale of plantations in 1863, it did not give up the idea of teaching them to read and write. Some plantations and parts of others were set aside as school farms, the profits of which were to be applied to the education of the people. Later when Congress ordered the sale of the school farms in 1866, it provided that the money arising from the sale should be invested in United States bonds and be appropriated to "the support of schools, without distinction of color or race, on the islands in the parishes of Saint Helena and Saint Luke."[49]

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Pierce, in his "Second Report to the Secretary of the Treasury," declared that the movement which he had inaugurated had exceeded his "most sanguine expectations." "Industrial results have been reached, which put at rest the often reiterated assumption that this territory and its products can only be cultivated by slaves. A social problem which has vexed the wisest approaches a solution."[50] The superintendents, however, were by no means willing to concede as much. Philbrick wrote in 1862, "I don't believe much can be made out of this generation by free labor, nor out of the next without teaching them to read."[51] In 1863 W. C. Gannett thought their state of morals "decidedly better than it was under slavery—less of licentiousness, lying, and stealing,—and more general manliness and self-respect." "But," he added, "they are very far behind, in character as well as intelligence, and I

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[49] *U. S. Statutes at Large*, XIV, chap. CC, sec. 8.
[50] "Second Report," *Rebellion Record*, sup., I, 323.
[51] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 110.

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175 993 692 the Island. As one of the preachers explained, "when one member gets wrong and the case cannot be settled at home it is taken to the church and sometimes the member is subjected [to] little embarrassment." [25]

175 692 It was many years, however, before the praise houses and churches obtained the prestige in settling disputes that they exercise today. In the first days of freedom, the cases going up to the "unjust law," as the people term legal processes, were numerous. Miss Towne's brother, William Edward Towne, was appointed a magistrate for St. Helena in 1869. "Some days half a dozen cases are brought before him," wrote Miss Towne, "and one day in the week, Tuesday, he and the other two selectmen have a meeting and make out jury lists, and do all sorts of township business. . . . I think a constable or two are here every day, to get orders or bring culprits." [26]

175 658 871 In 1866, as it has already been pointed out, the school farms were sold and the plantation schools abandoned, but the fund arising from the sale of the land was set aside for the establishment of schools in St. Helena's and St. Luke's parishes "without distinction of race or color." By 1871 this fund had amounted to something more than $68,000.[27] The benevolent associations, such as the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association, the Germantown Associ-

[25] MS, "St. Helena." In possession of Penn School.

[26] *Letters and Diary*, pp. 210, 211.

[27] *Senate Mis. Doc.* no. 79, 41st Cong., 3d sess. In response to an inquiry from Congress as to "the total amount of funds in the hands of any officer of the Government, set apart for the purposes of education in the parishes of St. Helena and St. Luke, in Beaufort County, South Carolina," Commissioner A. Pleasanton replied: " . . . there is invested in United States bonds . . . about $57,000; and there is in the hands of Collector Cloutman, of the second district, South Carolina, between three and four thousand dollars, and in the hands of Hon. W. E. Wording, not yet turned over to Collector Cloutman, between eight and nine thousand dollars."

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ation, and the Benezet Association, all of Pennsylvania, continued to keep teachers in the field until about 1872,[28] and Philbrick employed teachers for the people on his plantations until he sold the land. State schools were not started on St. Helena Island until 1874, and then conducted for three months in "small rooms of dwelling houses, or rough cotton houses—out of repair and without glass windows."[29] The three trustees for St. Helena, of whom Miss Towne was one, hoped to build a schoolhouse each year until every part of the Island was accommodated. With the aid of the Federal fund, they were able to erect small buildings and keep them in repair.

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The public schools, however, were always inadequate, for there were never sufficient funds to equip them properly and no money whatever to provide the pupils with books and slates, and the pupils themselves had no ready money with which to buy them. "The State schools," wrote Miss Towne in 1874, "are now taught by colored teachers of small attainment and experience, mostly from our Penn Schools[30] in this district, or by the returned 'old owners,' who also have little experience."[31]

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Miss Towne, with the assistance of Miss Murray and sometimes with that of her graduates, enlarged the curriculum of Penn School and gradually extended the school's influence over the Island. The school offered its pupils the orthodox classical education in the elementary

[28] The Benezet Association gave some aid to Penn School until about 1879.

[29] MS, Letters of Laura M. Towne. Laura M. Towne to F. R. Cope, Nov. 13, 1873.

[30] There were several schools in the region around Beaufort during the periods of occupation and reconstruction supported by Pennsylvania benevolent societies.

[31] MS, Letters of Laura M. Towne. Laura M. Towne to F. R. Cope, April 11, 1874.